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REAGAN BLASTS NICARAGUANS: CHIDES SOVIETS
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WASHINGTON

President Reagan opened Captive Nation's Week Monday with a blistering denunciation of "communist totalitarianism" and aligned himself with Pope John Paul II in singling out Nicaragua for special reproach.

"We condemn all tyrants who deny their citizens human rights, whether they be dictators of the left or the right," he said in ceremonies marking the signing of the Captive Nations Week proclamation.

But his barbs were reserved for "communist totalitarianism." He demanded a full accounting on the status of Soviet dissidents Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Elena Bonner. And he sought to pressure Congress for money for CIA-backed rebels in Nicaragua.

"Peace is our highest aspiration," Reagan said. "But we stand for peace with freedom and for peace with dignity."

"To those who believe our policy must always be willful ignorance of ugly truths, must be silence in the face of persecution, and appeasement or surrender to aggression, I say that price is far too steep and we dare not and will never pay it," he said.

The East Room ceremony was attended by ethnic leaders -- most of them immigrants from Eastern European nations under communist dominion and many of them Catholic.

Reagan noted that the pope recently disapproved of the Marxist Nicaraguan government's inclusion of the Catholic Church on its list of "enemies."

"I know I speak for millions of Americans who join the Pope in saying we, too, disapprove; and yes, people of Nicaragua, we, too, suffer with you," Reagan said.

He suggested that members of Congress who have refused funds for the CIA-sponsored Nicaraguan rebels "to reflect on the fatal consequences of complacency and isolationism."

"It's vital for the sake of our own future that the Congress and the American people respond to the democratic aspirations of the Nicaraguan people," he said.

He told the ethnic leaders at the ceremony that they had seen "the full gamut of totalitarian terror" and pledged, "I'll be proud to stand by you always."

Reagan has recently moderated his anti-Soviet rhetoric in efforts to revive arms control talks, but the Soviets did not escape censure.

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